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'So Many Pitfalls': Feds Push School-Based Health Centers as Critics Sound Alarm About Lack of Parental Consent

Supporters of school-based health centers have championed access to healthcare on the underserved — but critics say regionally-run programs are circumventing parents and the state's own public health consulting without parental consent.

By Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.

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The move to grow the U.S. federal government's role in rapidly expanding the use of school-based health centers (SBHCs) across the country has some critics concerned children will receive, in the absence of parental consent, unnecessary or unwanted medical interventions — including vaccines — without their parents' knowledge or consent.

Supporters say the centers, co-funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and overseen by the Children's Health Defense's (CHD) legal team, led by Tim Donohoe:

"It's scary because these health centers sound really good. In some of the rural areas and underserved areas, they're going to want to go to these centers and get these services," Donohoe said.

"And while there may be some conveniences, there are so many concerns that I'm concerned that parents don't realize that their children are going to be involved in all medical decisions and I fear they are being left out of the equation."

SBHCs are intended to provide high-quality healthcare to kids by offering "one-stop shopping" for medical, dental, mental health services and more, according to a 2022 report by Harvard University's Center for Health Law and Policy Innovation, which is supported by the provider of behavioral healthcare through SBHCs using Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

The reports — written and reported to "address service inefficiency" — concluded: "These issues can be addressed through the implementation of a requirement to successful school-based HIV exemplary programs."

Merck, the maker of the Gardasil HPV vaccine, is one of the funders of the Kaiser Family Foundation's annual survey organization that "works on issues, research, policy, and sharing facts on health issues."

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Federal, state authorities pour taxpayer money into school-based health centers

The idea of opening school health centers is public, effective and popular around the world for over two decades, but events in 2021 caused SBHCs to catch on like wildfire.

Congress and President Joe Biden in June 2021 passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which provided $1 billion for SBHCs, and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the Community Partnerships to Advance Resilience and Equity (CPARE) supporting the provision of behavioral assistance through SBHCs using Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

The legislation charged the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) with expanding access to Medicaid healthcare services for SBHCs, their staff and students in schools, and reducing the administrative burden on SBHCs.

A CMS spokesperson told The Defender that Medicaid and CHIP now provide reimbursement for services given in SBHCs for children and teens who are covered by those programs.

In 2022, HHS awarded $25 million in grants to 125 SBHCs "to improve and strengthen access to school-based mental health services across the country."

Such public officials are dedicating funds to expand SBHCs. For instance, the governor of Georgia in his 2022 proposed an investment of $125 million to expand school-based health services to rural communities.

Pediatricians can 'partner' with schools

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports SBHCs and said in a policy statement that pediatricians may act as "sponsors" by partnering with a school health center (SHC) or an extension of their practice if the pediatrician does not care given at a SHC.

"Sponsors also include local hospitals that can provide prearranged after hours and school vacation coverage and financial support for SHCs," the AAP said.

The Defender reached out to the AAP statement's lead authors for comments on how parental consent is handled in SBHCs, but they did not respond to publication deadline.

CHD has been the support of the School-Based Health Alliance. In addition to funding from Merck, the alliance receives funding from Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) and CMS.

Meanwhile, Maternal Love by CHD revealed that the HHS grant for SBHCs for research headed by a Merck consultant that focused on developing The Immunization Approach Training," where providers simply "announce" a child will be receiving the HPV vaccine as part of a routine office visit, instead of asking for parents' "permission."

The program even touted research into a testing method called "motivational language protocol" that helped to change how they talk to their patients to increase the likelihood HPV vaccine acceptance.

Meanwhile, a force band is taking place in multiple states where some lawmakers are pushing legislation that would allow minors to receive treatments to prevent sexually transmitted diseases — including Merck's HPV vaccine — without parental consent.

"In many pitfalls ... so many ways for someone else to be involved in medical decisions"

Jaelee Tanguay, an attorney with nearly 20 years of experience advocating for children in various areas of the law, told The Defender:

"There's no need. The way that many schools will be seeking home blanket consent to treat forms for parents to sign.

"Parents need to be aware that there are not the traditional authorization requests for the school nurse to give him oral or to treat tonsillitis.

Tanguay, CHD's director of campaign and research, explained that the forms parents sign to enroll their child in SBHC the legal authorization to "comprehensive healthcare."

This could include — but may not be limited to — "the ability to provide preventative treatment, behavioral and mental health services, reproductive counseling, lab and prescription services, immunizations and disease management," Tanguay said.

Moreover, SBHC staff will have "direct access" to a minor child, Tanguay said. "In many pitfalls ... so many ways for someone else to be involved in medical decisions without the need to consult with and get permission from parents."

"The opportunity to circumvent both parental rights and informed consent is ripe for abuse," Tanguay warned.

Johnson agreed, saying, "There are so many pitfalls here, so many ways for someone else to be making parental decisions."

Johnson shared with The Defender a consent form currently used in a school district north of Atlanta, Georgia.

The form says nothing about parents being notified before, during or after treatment, it reads:

"I hereby voluntarily give my consent for [my child] to receive health services with Georgia Highlands Medical Services at [a Gwinnett County School]."

"It further authorizes any health care provider and professional staff working for the clinic to provide such medical tests, diagnoses, procedures and treatments as are reasonably necessary or advisable for the medical evaluation and management of [my child's] health problems."

The form does not clarify who determines what services are "reasonably necessary or advisable" for a child, or what parental rights are revoked in that process, it states:

"I understand that my signing this consent allows the health care provider and professional clinic staff of Georgia Highlands Medical Services Cumming Elementary Schools to provide comprehensive health services to my child and to consult with my child's parents or guardians."

Again, the form does not clarify what "comprehensive health services" are, or "physical and behavioral health services" or how parents will be informed of the determination for what services their child may receive.

"I think about my own kids when they were in school," Johnson said. "How easily they could have been tapped to get a vaccine or some other medical service, and I wouldn't have known about it."

"It's really dangerous to have all of these things offered to them without the parents even being aware," she said. "A lot of kids — now that I'm a parent — They want to do what the adults are telling them to do."

According to the CHD, a key component of its Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model, which includes SBHCs, is "family engagement."

However, the agency's 57-page document about family engagement mentions parental permission only once and does not discuss parental consent for medical treatment beyond the application of sunscreen during recess.

According to a CMS spokesperson, SBHCs "follow the same practices as any other healthcare provider regarding parental consent for medical care and HIPAA privacy ... including parental consent requirements."

The spokesperson did not go into detail on whether consent would be requested generally or for each specific medical treatment.

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Where's the regulatory oversight?

Tanguay pointed out that SBHCs exist without proper regulatory oversight.

According to the Stand for Health Freedom, a nonprofit "dedicated to protecting informed consent in medical care," SBHCs are "completely unregulated."

For instance, it is presently unclear how HIPAA (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) and FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) will apply to parents' and students' health information.

Stand for Health Freedom said:

"Parents must engage politically and work with state health freedom leaders to ask lawmakers to either ban SBHCs in favor of the existing limited school nurse model, or place guardrails on SBHCs to protect parental consent and involvement in their minor children's healthcare."

Meanwhile, proponents of SBHCs, such as the School-Based Health Alliance, say that SBHCs are "dedicated to supporting the whole child."

"Whole child refers to the idea that students' physical, mental, emotional and social health are all important and must be addressed in a comprehensive manner to ensure students are healthy and ready to learn," the alliance said.

Johnson said she disliked being "so skeptical of everything" that they automatically benefit some people" but added, "as a parent, it is your job and your right to be a part of the decisions that affect the health and well-being of your child."

Johnson said parents who experienced or witnessed vaccine injury would be "shocked" at how easily medical decisions in their children are made between agencies, including schools.

Read the COVID response created even more skeptics," she said, adding:

"It's unfortunate that we have to approach medicine in this way, but it's the world we live in. What should be? And that's where we are."

The Defender's Maj. Kassandra Hall is based in the School-Based Healthcare Alliance as to how parental consent in SBHCs is handled and what they'd like parents who have questions about SBHCs to know. She has not received a response. The alliance did not respond by our publication deadline.

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Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.

Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D., is a reporter and researcher for The Defender based in Washington, D.C. She received her doctorate degree in Political Science at the University of Texas at Austin (2017), and a master's degree in communication and leadership from Gonzaga University (2009). She is a graduate of the Defender's Media Freedom Communications. Her thoughts on science and freedom in the United States and in Russia is launched.

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Lisa
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

And watch it be the bribes to attract a certain investment, all they have to do is send the kid to the clinic and they get the money. Sick. Sick. Sick. Parents need to be aware and get involved and completely removed the adult guardian and parental consent.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Candace Cox Saunders
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Again every word of indeed!

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Peggy Rees
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Everything we all over this one...parents are going to be back to the dark, and this distance shape will lead to disaster. The schools are not parents and should not be making decisions about medical treatments for children. Parents must be involved in all of these decisions and denials.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Mary Hansen
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

How about decent school lunches and outdoor recess? How about no more than 2 hours of homework? How about no more than 2 hours of homework? How about no more than 2 hours of homework? Another piece of evil from the United States of Corporations.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Lisa
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Wow! Can't wait to try this in NJ?

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Amanda B
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

I'm so sick for schools and in the healthcare!!!

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Jill Jensen
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

It should be a system where, of course - the gov't can't prosper!

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Lindsay B
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Schools should NOT have health clinics. They already have school health nurses that really don't do much of anything. Waste of money. Keep government out of it.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Lisa Reed
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

I agree. If one of the kids had, we could offer them some community clinics, which is already there in the schools, while keeping proper handling of minors' healthcare information.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Veronique
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Parents are not involved in the English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Period Please. If you can take your kid out of governmental indoctrination, please do so. Public schools are a tool for the elite.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Charlie Tapper
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Let another way for the gov to circumvent and erode parents' rights.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Jessica Lee
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Wow. We are not in the thing of principal. However, we're banned that we can't have any things involved church or high likelihood of abuse. The government is not to be trusted with kids... the list of "beneficial treatments" that will be given to these children without parental consent is long. Parents, you must be involved in your children's healthcare and the diagnosis or prescription for the best care.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Jessica Lee
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

If this comes to our local neighborhoods, we will need to be paying close eyes and fighting this with everything we have. Our children are not guinea pigs for the state. They are our children and we are responsible for their well-being and care.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Candace Cox Saunders
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Amen of a special needs kid, told me that such a form was sent home to her parents and she refused to sign it and sent a letter explaining why she refused to sign it. Unfortunately, the school system ignored her refusal and proceeded to administer whatever they wanted to administer to her child.

Parents, please be vigilant, lots of parents either sit on the sidelines out of complacency or they're just completely misunderstand what they are signing.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Nic
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

TERRIBLE idea. Parents need to stay the ch.ck in the hole.

Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Candace Cox Saunders
Like · Reply · 1 · 1 hr

Just FYI, CO-OP has an program any my 7 1 comments left in public high school of God, no parents allowed. Parents are not involved in the English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. 2000 students' overnight' high school. Not incorporated if previous chronic neighborhood schools. Parents are not involved in the English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Parents are not involved in the English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Parents are not involved in the English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Parents are not involved in English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Parents are not involved in English language. I'm from the government and I'm here to help. Parents are not involved in

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1 0 Reply • Share ›

Brian Collecott
6 days ago

Does anyone recall the dangerous plan some years ago when US pharma wanted to pre-medicate all teenagers against 'possible' mental illness?

1 0 Reply • Share ›

CAWS → Brian Collecott
2 days ago

No but I remember TX wanting to put lithium in the water....

0 0 Reply • Share ›

boydconklin
7 days ago

Massachusetts and Big Pharma, two peas in a pod.
"Help Stop the Proposed School Vaccine Bills!
HB604 and SB1391 would delete the religious exemption for K-12th grade students from the current vaccine law, completely eliminating the exemption for students at both public and private schools. This exemption has been part of the MA vaccine statute for decades. HB2151/SB1458 would keep the exemption but would require all exemption requests to go through the MA Department of Public Health.
We oppose these bills for these reasons:
They would eliminate religious exemptions, result in decreased accountability and increased government bureaucracy, shame schools and parents, and allow minors to consent to vaccination without their parent or guardian's consent or knowledge.
Take Action: Email or call your MA legislators and ask them to oppose these coercive and discriminatory vaccine bills.
Dear Senator/Representative Last Name,
I am writing to ask you to oppose HB604, titled An Act relative to routine childhood immunizations, SB1391 An Act relative to vaccines and preventing future disease outbreaks, and HB2151/SB1458, titled An Act promoting community immunity, by voting NO if this legislation makes it to the floor for a vote and by asking members of the Joint Committee

see more

1 0 Reply • Share ›

Meave G. → boydconklin
6 days ago

I don't see how this could pass constitutional muster. How is this not restricting the free exercise of religion?

0 0 Reply • Share ›

Someone
7 days ago

I agree that health centers at schools in the current climate would be a bad idea but I do think that they could be a benefit to rural and low income communities when informed consent is properly handled. But sadly this won't happen as long as parents are seen as barriers rather than as the vital part of a child's health that they are and informed consent is seen as optional rather than absolutely necessary to the care of any human being, adult or child.

1 0 Reply • Share ›

CAWS
2 days ago

Not about engaging families or medical equity. It is about pushing vaccines, removing parental consent and scamming medicaid with unnecessary treatments. They have been pulling this since I was a child in the 50s. Look up the Aspen dental lawsuits from the "care" they gave kids without consent in schools. Never take your kid to a medicaid dentist; they just make up stuff and lie to your face. Now they just want to make it legal and maybe federal law. NO WAY ! My kids & grand kids have been drilled that they are not to receive ANY medical or dental treatment at school as we have our own doctors. If they are pressured they are to call us and if refused they are to fight back and RUN to get help. Of course with all the other horrors going on in schools these days I would be forced to home school if I had kids.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

CastleConnell
3 days ago

The state taking away parental authority. The kids are being sacrificed to the pressure of Pharma.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

francois delmar
3 days ago

A person has to be 21 to buy cigarettes and to buy alcohol I know is at least 18 years of age. That's when one' can join the military and vote, which makes a good case for 18 being the age when a person can decide what type of treatments , medical and otherwise, he/she may want or need. I don't really trust the state and educational institutions to make decisions for the good of the people; they have shown themselves to be...well...almost anti-human.As strange as that might sound. Or surprising. And very disappointing.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

Dr. Olivier Godichet
3 days ago

Fundamental mistake of the paradigm: much - much (Pareto cut the remains, residues, etc.

Fundamental system of forces

1) joining; ensure meeting but largest distance, lower strenght
2) within

2). 1 diverging +7+, - /-

2). 2. matching +/-, -/+
3)

There the basic system

Fundamental forces

1) gravity, 2) electromagnetic, 3) weak interartion, 4) strong interaction
possibly the fifth : granulating?

Level up, seek analogies, specify according the culster of physical data.

see more

0 0 Reply • Share ›

brbg
4 days ago

Globalist plan to remove parents from any control over their own children.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

francois delmar → brbg
3 days ago

Probably, and sincerely and idealistically for a segment who think this is one step that will make earth a Garden of Eden, but for the "unwashed masses" (ie, not millionaires or billionaires or trillionaires) it is just one more brick on the road to Hell..

0 0 Reply • Share ›

Izzy Wright
5 days ago

They almost tricked me into signing one of those blanket consent forms a few years ago. Right before COVID closed the schools, my son was in one of the Columbus (Ohio) City Schools preschools (at Moler Elementary). They had just started a school-based health clinic at the school. They said he needed a developmental screening and that they wanted to double-check his hearing. But the permission form his teacher wanted me to sign was worded similarly to the example from Georgia in the article, and gave general consent to medical treatment. I insisted on a one-time permission form for the specific screenings only, and I insisted on being present at the school. A few weeks later, those blanket consent forms were sent home to all the parents. His older brother was already schooling at home to better fit his needs. I pulled my younger son from public school permanently at the start of the COVID psyop, but I had already decided he would not attend Kindergarten in a brick and mortar public school. Both of my children have been thriving educationally at Ohio Virtual Academy.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

nick quinlan
6 days ago edited

Pharma is relentless in their attack upon our children, they will resort to any and all despicable means to get their poison into every child. They have captured our govt, the entire educational system, from Kindergarten, to university, and our media, and the entire health care system. It's a horrifying reality they are attempting to erect around us all. They have no liability, and they are on the path to eliminating informed consent, and trying to remove parents from the equation entirely.
People are fleeing from all vaccines, and rightly so. Their vaccine agenda is collapsing before their very eyes, and this is their response? People lose faith and trust because of all of the lies, fraud, and deceit surrounding vaccines, so they go full authoritarian in response.

This is the most evil, fraudulent, criminal industry that ever existed.

0 0 Reply • Share ›

Larry Cox
7 days ago

The argument I've heard is that a fair amount of kids are terrorized by their parents due to neglect or abuse. And according to statistics I've seen, this could be true for from 1/4 to 1/2 of all kids. This is a problem for parents rights groups. It will need to be addressed.

0 1 Reply • Share ›

Brave Freedom → Larry Cox
7 days ago

Larry that is nonsense.

1/2 of All kids are abused? LOL Sounds like something Father Shenanigan would say so he could have access to the little boys.

Let's try something novel like teaching math instead of making these embicilic teachers believe they are "providers" too.

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